



Media Release

The Singapore Biennale 2016 Symposium

The Symposium explores the theme: Why Biennale At All?

Singapore, 5 January 2017 – Singapore Biennale 2016 presents Singapore Biennale 2016 Symposium with the theme: *Why Biennale At All?* Taking place over two days during Singapore Art Week 2017, the Symposium provides a dynamic space for interested and invested parties to explore and discuss the various issues and questions surrounding the biennale concept and format. Singapore Biennale 2016 Symposium takes place from 21 to 22 January 2017 at the Gallery Theatre, National Museum of Singapore.

Drawing from Singapore Biennale 2016's question – *from where we are, how do we see the world?* – the Singapore Biennale 2016 Symposium takes a critical look at the role, relevance and potentialities of the biennale. Contextualising key ideas and questions about biennale modalities and art practices in Southeast, South and East Asia, the Symposium will present these in relation to the region and beyond.

Key Issues and themes include:

- Roles and significance of biennales
- Biennale audiences and publics
- Contesting the biennale format
- Future of the biennale
- Particularities of the Singapore Biennale

Please refer to Annex A for the full programme.

Through presentations and conversations from a diverse range of stakeholders including biennale directors, curators, artists and scholars, the Singapore Biennale 2016 Symposium aims to uncover, analyse and question core issues and themes. Speakers include Emeritus Professor John Clark, Distinguished Professor Ien Ang, Associate Professor Anthony Gardner, Laurent Gutierrez and Valerie Portefaix of MAP Office, artist-curator and Artistic Director of Kochi-Muziris Biennale 2014 Jitish Kallat, Nominated Member of Parliament Kok Heng Leun, Monica Narula from RAQs Media Collective, and curator Alia Swastika among others. Please refer to Annex B for speaker profiles.

The Singapore Biennale 2016 Symposium is convened by Assistant Professor Hoe Su Fern from the Singapore Management University (SMU) School of Social Science in partnership with Singapore Art Museum, together with the collaboration of the Goethe-Institut Singapore.

The Singapore Biennale 2016 Symposium is held during Singapore Art Week 2017. From 20 to 22 January 2017, SAM presents a weekend of Singapore Biennale after-work parties, artist performances and community activities for the young and old alike. Artist performances include Melati Suryodarmo's *Behind the Light*, Niranjan Rajah's *Koboi Balik Lagi (The 'Koboi' Returns Again)* performed by SAM curator John Tung, and Azizan Paiman's *Putar Alam Café*. For more information, please refer to Annex C.

Singapore Biennale 2016 is anchored at the Singapore Art Museum on Bras Basah Road and Queen Street. Venues include Singapore Art Museum and SAM at 8Q, Asian Civilisations Museum, de Suantio Gallery at SMU, National Museum of Singapore, Stamford Green and Peranakan Museum. Titled *An Atlas of Mirrors*, Singapore Biennale 2016 takes place from 27 October 2016 to 26 February 2017. The four-month long international contemporary art exhibition is organised by SAM and commissioned by the National Arts Council of Singapore.

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Annex A: Singapore Biennale 2016 Symposium

The Singapore Biennale 2016 Symposium: *Why Biennale At All?*

Date: 21 & 22 January 2017

Venue: Gallery Theatre
Basement, National Museum of Singapore
93 Stamford Road, Singapore 178897

Ticketing: \$90 for 2-day pass (\$70 for students)
\$50 for 1-day pass (\$40 for students)
Tickets available from SISTIC

Website: www.singaporeartmuseum.sg/singaporebiennale

The Singapore Biennale 2016 Symposium contextualises key ideas and questions about biennale modalities and art practices in Southeast, South, and East Asia in relation to the international contemporary art circuit. It will feature presentations and conversations between biennale directors, curators, art historians, writers, and artists.

Scheduled to run over two days during the Singapore Art Week in 2017, the SB2016 Symposium asks: *Why Biennale At All?*, and will be shaped to enable different modes of engagement with core issues relating to the making, scope and experience of biennales, with special focus on the region's expositions.

The Singapore Biennale 2016 Symposium is convened by Assistant Professor Hoe Su Fern from the Singapore Management University (SMU) School of Social Science in partnership with Singapore Art Museum, together with the collaboration of the Goethe-Institut Singapore.

[Please click here for the full programme.](#)

Annex B: Singapore Biennale 2016 Symposium – Speakers' Biographies



Ade Darmawan

Ade Darmawan lives and works in Jakarta as an artist, curator and director of ruangrupa, an artist-initiated organisation that focuses on visual arts and its socio-cultural context, particularly in urban environments. His artistic practice encompasses installations, objects, digital print, video and public art. As an artist and curator, Ade has participated in several projects and exhibitions in Indonesia as well as internationally. With ruangrupa as a collaborative platform, he has also participated in the Gwangju Biennale (2002), the Istanbul Biennale (2005) and the Asia Pacific Triennial (2012). From 2006-2009 he was a member of the Jakarta Arts Council, and in 2009 he was appointed Artistic Director of the Jakarta Biennale XIII. Ade is the Executive Director of the Jakarta Biennale since 2013. Most recently in 2015, he held his solo exhibition "Magic Centre" at the Portikus contemporary art centre in Frankfurt, Germany



Anthony Gardner

Anthony Gardner is Associate Professor of Contemporary Art History and Theory at the University of Oxford, where he is also the Director of Graduate Studies at the Ruskin School of Art. He has published widely on subjects including post-colonialism, post-socialism and curatorial histories, and is an editor of the MIT Press journal *ARTMargins*. Among his books are *Mapping South: Journeys in South-South Cultural Relations* (Melbourne, 2013), *Politically Unbecoming: Postsocialist Art against Democracy* (MIT Press, 2015) and, also through MIT Press in 2015, the anthology *Neue Slowenische Kunst: From Kapital to Capital* (with Zdenka Badovinac and Eda Čufer). His latest book, co-authored with Charles Green, is *Biennials, Triennials and documenta: The exhibitions that created contemporary art*, published by Wiley-Blackwell in summer 2016.



David Chan

David Chan is a full-time artist and also an earnest arts educator. In 2004, he won the 23rd UOB Painting of the Year – Representational Medium Category Award. Comfortable in both sculpture and painting, his subject matters revolve around human behavior and representations of social commentary. David has exhibited in a number of countries including, China, America, Taiwan, Indonesia, Korea, Malaysia, and in 2011 his work was selected for the 54th Venice Biennale at the Fondazione Claudio Buziol, the same work traveled to the Wereldmuseum Rotterdam in Netherlands the next year.

Apart from making art, David also lectures at National Institute of Education and School of Art Design & Media in National Technological University. He is currently an Artist Mentor with National arts council.



Fyerool Darma

Fyerool Darma is an emerging artist born and living in Singapore. He works primarily in the language of painting, where he employs materials and forms, and obliterates part of his image to understand the relationships between the ambiguity and lucidity of symbols, texts or a single image. He paints, to unweave the narratives of Nusantara, exploring the realms of history, cultural identity, migration, storytelling and the natural world.

He has presented his paintings in his solo exhibition *MOYANG* (flaneur gallery, 2015) and participated in-group shows, *A National Conversation: blah!* (Brother Joseph McNally Gallery – Institute of Contemporary Art Singapore, 2013), *Portrait in Verses* (Fred Torres Gallery, New York 2015) and has been included in a survey of ASEAN contemporary art, *Art of ASEAN* (Bank Negara Malaysia Museum and Art Gallery, Kuala Lumpur 2015 – 2016).



John Chia

Dr John Chia is a medical oncologist who has an interest in contemporary art. He collects works by artists based in Southeast Asia.



John Clark

John Clark is Professor Emeritus in Art History at the University of Sydney, the author of five books and editor or co-editor of another five. His *Asian Modernities: Chinese and Thai art of the 1980s and 1990s*, Sydney, Power Publications, 2010, is a cross-disciplinary inter-Asian comparison of modern art and art worlds, and won the Best Art Book Prize of the Art Association of Australia and New Zealand in 2011. After his *Modernities of Chinese Art*, Leiden: Brill, 2010, his most recent book is *Modernities of Japanese Art*, Leiden: Brill, 2013. He has completed the draft of a two-volume study, *The Asian Modern, 1850s – 1990s* which includes detailed comparative studies of more than twenty-five Asian artists in five generations between 1850s and 1990s, plus two volumes of supplementary materials. His *Contemporary Asian Art at Biennials* is scheduled for publication by National University of Singapore Press in mid-2017.

He devised the original outline for and co-curated *Modern Boy, Modern Girl: Modernity in Japanese Art, 1910-1935*, at the Art Gallery of New South Wales in 1998, and in 2014 co-curated an exhibition of the work of Araya Rasdjarmrearnsook in Sydney and Canberra.



Joyce Toh

Joyce Toh is a Co-Head Curatorial at Singapore Art Museum and oversees its Philippines collection and Publications portfolio. She holds a Masters in Aesthetics (Philosophy of Art) from University of York, UK and a BA in Art History from Syracuse University, USA. Her past exhibitions include the Asia Pacific Breweries Foundation Singapore Art Prize 2011 exhibition, *Thrice Upon A Time: A Century of Story in the Art of the Philippines*, and *is it tomorrow yet? Highlights from the Daimler Art Collection*, and *Medium at Large*.



Kok Heng Leun

Kok Heng Leun is the Artistic Director of Singaporean theatre company Drama Box, and a prominent figure in both the English and Chinese-language theatres in Singapore. Thus far, he has directed over 80 plays, including Kuo Pao Kun's *Spirit Play*, Forum Theatre *Trick or Threat!*, *HERstory* (Singapore Arts Festival 2011) , *Drift* (Singapore Season 2008), *It Won't Be Too Long* (Singapore International Arts Festival, 2015) and *Manifesto* (collaboration with The Necessary Stage, 2016).

Heng Leun strongly believes in engaging the community in his works to promote critical dialogues about the world we live in. Known to be one of the most respectable Forum Theatre practitioners in Asia, he has also ventured into multi-disciplinary applied and engaged arts projects such as *Project Mending Sky* which deals with environmental issues, *PRISM* which looks at issues of governance in Singapore, and *Both Sides, Now* which is a long-going socially-engaged art project that explores what it means to live and die well.

In recent years, Heng Leun has been actively advocating cultural exchanges and dialogues among artists and cultural workers in the region as well as internationally. He is currently the Arts Nominated Member of Parliament and has actively spoken on civil society as well as arts and cultural issues in the Singapore Parliament.



Lee Weng Choy

Lee Weng Choy is president of the Singapore Section of the International Association of Art Critics. From 2000 to 2009, he was the Artistic Co-Director of The Substation arts centre in Singapore. Lee has taught at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, the Chinese University of Hong Kong, and the Sotheby's Institute of Art, Singapore. He has convened and participated in numerous conferences, and done project work with many arts organisations, including the NTU Centre for Contemporary Art Singapore and National Gallery Singapore. His essays, which discuss contemporary art and culture, Southeast Asia and Singapore, have appeared in such publications as: *After the Event: New Perspectives on Art History; Modern and Contemporary Southeast Asian Art*, *Over Here: International Perspectives on Art and Culture*; and *Theory in Contemporary Art since 1985*.



Louis Ho

Louis Ho is Curator at the Singapore Art Museum, where his focus is on the art of Malaysia, Myanmar and Brunei. His first exhibition for the museum was the permanent collection show, *After Utopia: Revisiting the Ideal in Asia Contemporary Art*. Prior to joining the Singapore Art Museum's curatorial team, Louis Ho was an independent art historian, critic and curator. He also lectures at the National Institute of Education, and is a contributor to various art publications, such as *Art Asia Pacific* and *Pipeline*. He was trained in art history, and his research interests include Southeast Asian visual culture, the intersections between art and the social, and cinema.



MAP Office (Laurent Gutierrez + Valérie Portefaix)

MAP Office is a multidisciplinary platform devised by Laurent Gutierrez and Valérie Portefaix. This duo of artists/architects has been based in Hong Kong since 1996, working on physical and imaginary territories using varied means of expression including drawing, photography, video, installations, performance, and literary and theoretical texts. Their entire project forms a critique of spatio-temporal anomalies and documents how human beings subvert and appropriate space. Humour, games, and fiction are also part of their approach, in the form of small publications providing a further format for disseminating their work. Early 2013, MAP Office was the recipient of the 2013 edition of the Sovereign Asian Art Prize. Their last research project “Hong Kong Is Land”, was exhibited as part of Uneven Growth at the MoMA (New York), the MAK (Vienna) and the Rockbund (Shanghai).



Michael Lee

Michael Lee is an artist, curator and publisher based in Singapore. He researches urban memory and fiction, especially the contexts and implications of loss. He transforms his observations into objects, diagrams, situations, curations or texts.

Michael has staged solo exhibitions at Künstlerhaus Bethanien (Berlin), Hanart TZ Gallery (Hong Kong), Baba House (Singapore) and Alliance Francaise de Singapour (Singapore). He has participated in various biennales and other international platforms including Shenzhen Sculpture (2014); Singapore (2011); Shanghai (2010) and Guangzhou Triennial (2011, 2008).

His curatorial projects include *Between, Beside, Beyond: Daniel Libeskind's Reflections and Key Works 1989-2014* (Singapore Art Museum, 2007), and his editorial projects include the series *Corridors: Notes on the Contemporary* (published by Studio Bibliothèque with various others, 2013-) and *Who Cares: 16 Essays on Curating in Asia* (co-edited with Alvaro Rodriguez Fominaya, published by Para/Site Art Space, Hong Kong, 2010). He had been awarded the APBF Signature Art Prize People's Choice Award in 2011 and the Young Artist Award (Visual Arts) in 2005.

Michelle Lim

Michelle Lim is a writer, curator and art historian based in Singapore and New York. She is an assistant professor on the faculty of the NTU School of Art, Design and Media where she teaches East Asian art histories and contemporary curating. Michelle is also an associate curator for the Artist Pension Trust.

Michelle has been involved with the art world since the early 2000s. She has worked on research and curatorial projects for institutions such as the Asia Society Museum in New York, the Whitney Museum of American Art, Princeton University Art Museum and the National Museum of Singapore. She holds a PhD in art history from Princeton University and was a Curatorial Fellow in the Whitney Independent Study Program in New York.



Nur Hanim Khairuddin

Nur Hanim Khairuddin is an Associate Curator of Singapore Biennale 2016, an artist and independent curator based in Ipoh, Malaysia. She graduated from UiTM (Universiti Teknologi MARA) in Selangor, Malaysia with a bachelor's degree in Fine Art in 1994. Since then, she has participated in numerous exhibitions both locally and internationally, and was the recipient of several awards, the most notable of which was the Major Winner in the 1996 Young Contemporaries.

From 1996 to 2010, she worked as a curator at Perak Arts Foundation, and was responsible for the organisation of the annual multi-disciplinary Ipoh Arts Festival held in Ipoh, Perak (1996-2000). As a freelance curator, she has curated several solo exhibitions for prominent Malaysian artists such as Sulaiman Esa, Raja Shahrman Raja Aziddin and Shia Yih Yiing. She was also the curator for two editions of the *Kembara Jiwa* show which travelled to Bandung (Selasar Sunaryo), Jogjakarta (Taman Budaya) and Fukuoka (Asian Art Museum).

Nur Hanim is the Editor-in-Chief of *sentAp!*, a quarterly bi-language (English & Malay) publication founded in 2005. She is also the Co-Editor-in-Chief with Beverly Yong for the four-volume *Narratives of Malaysian Art* publication, and is currently one of the directors for Malaysian Art Archive & Research Support (MARS). At present, she is involved in a few art archival projects, including the archive of the late Ismail Hashim, a well-known pioneer of Malaysian art photography.



Patrick D. Flores

Patrick D. Flores is Professor of Art Studies at the Department of Art Studies at the University of the Philippines, which he chaired from 1997 to 2003, and Curator of the Vargas Museum in Manila. He is Adjunct Curator of the National Gallery Singapore. He was one of the curators of *Under Construction: New Dimensions in Asian Art* in 2000 and the Gwangju Biennale (Position Papers) in 2008. He was a Visiting Fellow at the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C. in 1999 and an Asian Public Intellectuals Fellow in 2004. Among his publications are *Painting History: Revisions in Philippine Colonial Art* (1999); *Remarkable Collection: Art, History, and the National Museum* (2006); and *Past Peripheral: Curation in Southeast Asia* (2008). He was a grantee of the Asian Cultural Council (2010) and a member of the Advisory Board of the exhibition *The Global Contemporary: Art Worlds After 1989* (2011) organized by the Center for Art and Media in Karlsruhe and member of the Guggenheim Museum's Asian Art Council (2011 and 2014). He co-edited the Southeast Asian issue with Joan Kee for *Third Text* (2011). He convened in 2013 on behalf of the Clark Institute and the Department of Art Studies of the University of the Philippines the conference "Histories of Art History in Southeast Asia" in Manila. He was a Guest Scholar of the Getty Research Institute in Los Angeles in 2014. He curated the Philippine Pavilion at the Venice Biennale in 2015.

Robin Peckham

Robin Peckham is a curator and editor living in Shanghai. Currently editor-in-chief of LEAP, the international art magazine of contemporary China, he also previously founded and operated the independent space Saamlung. He has organised exhibitions for institutions including K11 Art Foundation, M Woods Museum, City University of Hong Kong, Goethe-Institut, Ullens Center for Contemporary Art, and Long March Space.



Suman Gopinath

Suman Gopinath is the Associate Curator of Singapore Biennale 2016 and an independent curator based in Bangalore, India. She studied Fine Arts Administration and Curating at Goldsmiths' College, University of London, UK. Some of the exhibitions Suman has co-curated include *Nasreen Mohamedi*, Tate Liverpool, UK, 2014; the XI Jogjakarta Biennale, Equator 1 –*Shadowlines: Indonesia Meets India*, Jogjakarta, Indonesia, 2011 - 12; *Nasreen Mohamedi: Notes / Reflections on Indian Modernism*, an exhibition that travelled in Europe through 2009-11.

Suman also co-founded CoLab Art & Architecture (2005-2008). CoLab worked with artists, architects, curators and academics and presented contemporary Indian work within the context of international practice.

Apart from her curatorial work, Suman currently manages the Archival and Museum Fellowships at India Foundation for the Arts, (IFA) Bangalore. IFA aims at strengthening the practice, research and knowledge of the arts in India through its grants and fellowships.



Tan Siuli

Tan Siuli is Co-Head of the Curatorial team at the Singapore Art Museum, and oversees its Indonesia collection. She holds a Masters in Art History from University College London, UK, a BA in Literature and Art History from the University of Nottingham, UK, and a Postgraduate Diploma in Education from the National Institute of Education, Singapore. Her past exhibitions include *After Utopia: Revisiting the Ideal in Asian Contemporary Art*, *Unearthed*, *Chimera (The Collectors Show: Asian Contemporary Art from Private Collections)*, *Classic Contemporary: Contemporary Southeast Asian Art from the Singapore Art Museum Collection*; and *FX Harsono: Testimonies*. She was a Curator-Mentor in Curating Lab 2012, a co-curator of the Singapore Biennale 2013, a member of the Advisory Committee to the Indonesian Pavilion at the Venice Biennale 2013, and a Juror for the Bandung Contemporary Art Awards.



Tan Zi Hao

Tan Zi Hao is a multidisciplinary conceptual artist who works predominantly in installation and performance art. He has degrees in Cultural Studies and International Relations from the University of Nottingham, Malaysia and is pursuing a PhD in Southeast Asian Studies at the National University of Singapore. His artistic practice is informed by the contested politics of identities vis-à-vis the nation-state, and revolves around the potentiality of encountering otherness foreclosed by rigid state categories. His preoccupation with confronting multiplicity is manifested in subjects such as soil ecology, sea nomads, etymological diversity, postcolonial historiographies, mythical composite creatures, and organic assemblages such as carrier shells (*Xenophora pallidula*) and ant-killing assassin bugs (*Acanthaspis petax*). He has held exhibitions in Malaysia and internationally in Singapore, Kaohsiung, London and Paris. He also writes social commentary and art criticism, while working with NGOs in Malaysia. He lives and works in Serdang and the Klang Valley, Malaysia.



Xiang Liping

Xiang Liping is an Associate Curator of Singapore Biennale 2016 and a doctoral candidate of the China Academy of Art, Hangzhou. From 1999 to 2001, she was a lecturer at the Zhejiang Normal University. From 2006 to 2011, she worked as a curator and coordinator of the Shanghai Biennale at the Shanghai Art Museum, committing herself to developing and improving the Biennale.

In 2011, she wrote the feasibility report for the first state-run contemporary art museum in mainland China and later participated in its establishment as the Power Station of Art in Shanghai. Xiang is currently the Head of the Exhibition Department at the museum.

She has been involved in numerous curatorial projects, including *Translocalmotion: The 7th Shanghai Biennale* (2008); *Infantization: The New Power of Contemporary Chinese Art*, which toured Asia and Europe from 2007 to 2010; *The End of the Brush and Ink Era: Chinese Landscape* (2011); *Now Ink II* for SH Contemporary (2012); *Fiber and Space Art Exhibition from the China Academy of Art* (2013); *Copyleft: Appropriation in China* (2015).

Annex B: Singapore Biennale 2016 at Singapore Art Week 2017

Singapore Art Week(end) at Singapore Biennale 2016

Date: 20 – 22 January 2017, Friday – Sunday

Time: Friday & Saturday: 10am – 9pm
Sunday: 10am – 7pm

Venue: Singapore Art Museum
71 Bras Basah Road
Singapore 189555

Website: www.singaporeartmuseum.sg/singaporebiennale

Singapore Biennale 2016 celebrates Singapore Art Week 2017 with a festive party in the Singapore Art Museum (SAM) courtyards, a weekend of community activities, artist performances and extended opening hours.

Artist Performances

Koboi Balik Lagi (The 'Koboi' Returns Again) (by [Niranjan Rajah](#))

Performance by SAM Curator John Tung

Friday, 20 January 2017

6pm - 6.30pm

SAM at 8Q

Behind the Light by [Melati Suryodarmo](#)

Friday, 20 January 2017

2pm - 8pm

SAM

Putar Alam Café by [Azizan Paiman](#)

Saturday & Sunday, 21 & 22 January 2017

10am – 11.30am, 1pm – 2.30pm, 4pm – 5.30pm

SAM at 8Q